

# EDENTON



## Battle of Albemarle Sound



On May 5, 1864, the Confederate ironclad ram CSS *Albemarle* under Commander James W. Cooke, with the gunboats *Cotton Plant* and *Bombshell*, steamed out of the Roanoke River into Batchelor's Bay and Albemarle Sound before you, bound for New Bern. Dead ahead, however, waited the U.S. Navy gunboats *Ceres*, *Commodore Hull*, and *Whitehead*, and the transport *Ida May*. Beyond lay the double-ended



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steamers *Mattabesett*, *Sassacus*, *Wyalusing*, and *Miami*. Union Capt. Melancton Smith, commanding the fleet, intended to sink *Albemarle*. After dispatching *Cotton Plant* upriver, *Albemarle* and *Bombshell* engaged the Federals off Chowan County's Sandy



Crew, USS *Miami*

Point. During the three-hour battle, *Bombshell* sustained heavy damage and surrendered. *Albemarle* was rammed and almost sunk by *Sassacus* but fired point-blank into the steamer's boiler, disabling it. *Albemarle* then escaped upriver to Plymouth for repairs.

### DIVIDED LOYALTIES

Unionist sentiment was strong among eastern North Carolinians. The U.S. Navy presence in Albemarle sound began early in 1862, and many loyal men, both white and African American, enlisted. They included slaves and freedmen familiar with the Sound and its tributaries, who served as gunners, powder boys, cooks, and mechanics. Chowan County natives Henry Johnson, John Paxton, and Daniel Spruel sailed aboard *Miami*.

Other Edenton and Chowan County men joined local Confederate units, and many sympathizers moved farther inland. Chowan County Confederates included Col. James K. Marshall, Lt. Col. John C. Badham, Maj. Tristim L. Skinner, Capt. William Badham, Jr., Capt. John A. Benbury, Capt. Edward A. Small, Lt. John M. Jones, and Lt. Blake B. Hoskins. Edenton residents donated household, school, church, and courthouse bells to cast four bronze cannons for Capt. Badham's Edenton "Bell Battery," Co. B, North Carolina Light Artillery Battalion.



Capt. William Badham, Jr.  
Edenton Bell Battery

